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PREPARATION AND PACKING OF THE 1945 WOOL CLIP

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Very soon the wool harvest of 1945 will be under way. Millions of pounds of wool will be tumbling off the sheep under the shears, pouring into bags on the sacking stands, and trampers will be busy packing the clips for market. Handlers will be piling the bags as they are received at the warehouses and setting aside representative bags to be displayed to the Government wool appraisers who will value the clips.

Through experience gleaned from the wool take-over by the Commodity Credit Corporation in the past two years, certain facts have emerged which should be of great interest to the wool grower because they have important direct bearing on the value of his clip. These various points will be enumerated and discussed in the following paragraphs, and, as the wool grower reads them, he should keep in mind that they are to be taken as suggestions to him for preparing his clip in the best way possible. As in preparing other agricultural products for sale, wool should be prepared so that the clip has a distinct, favorable, psychological effect on the appraiser or the buyer. Just as a basket of clean white eggs is more acceptable to a purchaser than the same eggs would be if unwashed and dirty, so is a well-prepared wool clip better received than one that is poorly prepared. It should be kept in mind that no matter how well-prepared an inferior wool may be it still will not command the premium value of a superior quality clip. However THE VALUE OF ANY CLIP CAN BE INCREASED BY SUPERIOR PREPARATION.

In the past it has been the general custom for the wool grower to think of the value of his wool in terms of cents per pound. While cents per pound is rightly considered the important selling factor, there is another measure of value that is of even greater significance, namely, the total value per fleece. A grower whose wool has been sold for a cent or two less than his neighbor's feels rather chagrined, when, in reality, he may have good cause to be elated because his total value per fleece may be far greater than that received by his neighbor. Take, for example, Bill Jones' clip and Tom Smith's clip. Bill Jones receives a net price of 37 cents per pound for his wool; his average fleece weight was 8 pounds, and so he receives a total of \$2.96 per fleece. Tom Smith receives a net price of only 35 cents per pound for his wool; but he had an average fleece weight of 10 pounds, and so he receives \$3.50 per fleece. With each man running a band of 2,000 head Tom Smith receives a wool check that is \$1,080.00 greater than Bill Jones' check. This increased profit means a lot in these times when the margin of profit in the sheep business is growing narrower each year. So, in the future, wool growers should form the habit of thinking and talking about the amount of money received PER FLEECE rather than the money received per pound. And remember, good wool preparation is one way to get that added profit.

The important points of good wool preparation are as follows:

1. KEEP THE FLEECES CLEAN. Keep the shearing pens as clean as possible. If a sheep lies down on a dirty floor in the sweat shed, or shearing pen, manure, straw and dirt will stick to the outside of the wool and spoil

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- the appearance of the fleece. The floors of the individual shearer's pens should be kept clean. It should be the job of the sweeping boy to scrape and sweep the floors of the shearer's pens and the wool alley at least twice a day to remove all caked manure and dirt.
2. DON'T USE TOO MUCH BRANDING PAINT. Branding paint on wool is nothing less than a material defect when all is said and done. Paint brands have to be hand-clipped from the wool or specially processed thus adding to manufacturing cost and increasing the fiber loss. Branding fluids should always be used as sparingly as possible. Use small branding irons. If it is necessary to "daub" any of the sheep for culling or to subdivide the band, use a "dauber" with as small a surface as practicable. A tomato can is entirely too large; a round pint bottle is much better. Daub the sheep on top of the head as the wool there is of less value than that grown on the withers or on the back. Many wool growers do this even though they have some trouble at the dodge gate because the sheep crowd and keep their heads down between the legs of the animals in front. In bands where there are not enough black "markers" it is the custom to slobber branding paint along the back and sides of a white-wooled ewe or wether, in order that the animal can serve as a "marker". It would be much better to use the "bells" or sheep having black-spotted faces as "markers" than to foul a white fleece with excessive branding paint.
3. DON'T PACK UNTIED OR CARELESSLY TIED FLEECES. The Schedule of Values for Domestic Shorn Wool, 1945 Wool Purchase Program, issued by the Commodity Credit Corporation, states that "Except in the case of Texas 8 months and Texas fall wool, all untied clips shall be discounted two (2) cents per pound from the grease appraisal price." Tie each fleece securely, with the flesh end of the staple showing and the shoulder and side wools on the outside. Don't have any long streamers of wool hanging from the tied fleece--tuck them in under the string; these are seldom found when the fleece is correctly tied in the first place. A straggly, loosely tied fleece gives an appraiser a bad impression of the wool, and increases the time required to grade and sort at the warehouse and the mill. Use only PAPER FLEECE STRINGS TO TIE WOOL. The Commodity Credit Corporation Schedule of Values states that "The discount shall be ten (10) cents per pound, clean basis, for a lot tied with sisal or binder twine."
- Baling wire, that essential commodity, despite its diverse uses on sheep and cattle ranches, should NEVER be used to tie fleeces of wool. Commercially speaking, it ranks even lower than sisal or binder twine for tying fleeces. The appraisers may even direct that fleeces tied with baling wire shall be retied with paper string before they will appraise the lot.
4. TAKE ALL TAGS, DUNG LOCKS, AND STAINED PIECES OUT OF THE FLEECE. Tags, dung locks, stained pieces, and sweepings should be kept out of the fleeces. On the 1945 clips the Government wool appraisers have been instructed to make a deduction not to exceed three (3) percent of the grease appraisal price on clips which do not have all tags and other off wools packed separately. Tags and stained pieces, especially if carrying excessive moisture, stain white wool very badly and so render it unsuitable for use in making first-class goods in natural white or dyed light colors. Even if they are sufficiently dry to cause no staining their presence in the fleece detracts from the appearance and increases the sorting cost at the mill. So, it is best to remove them from the fleece before tying it and to pile them in a corner of the shearing shed along with the sweepings

from the floor. They should be packed in a separate bag at the end of shearing. NEVER PUT A LAYER OF TAGS IN A BAG ALONG WITH FLEECES. These tag rings, as they are called, will seriously prejudice the estimate of value. It is well to observe here that choice pieces of white wool very often become detached from the fleeces through faulty tying and may be left lying around on the floor to be swept up with the tags. As they are part of the fleece and have a high value they should be carefully picked up before becoming dirty and put into the bags along with the fleeces.

5. DON'T PACK BLACK WOOL WITH WHITE. Black, gray, or piebald fleeces should never come in contact with white wool, because black fibers in such fleeces will become detached and stick to the white fleece. In a piece of white or light-colored cloth black fibers are a very serious defect, as they have to be plucked out by hand with tweezers thus creating a significant increase in the manufacturing cost. The best thing to do is to put all the black sheep in a separate shearer's pen and let one shearer shear them out. In this way all the black wool can be confined to a small section of the shearing shed and contamination of the white wool avoided. However, as this is not always practicable, and the black sheep generally go into the individual shearing pens along with the white ewes, every care should be taken to see that after a shearer has shorn a black sheep the fleece and every loose fiber should be swept up and carried to the black pile.

To pack black, gray or piebald fleeces in with the white fleeces is to seriously penalize the whole clip. The reasons given above are sufficient to prove the disadvantages of such a practice, which constitutes one of the most serious offences in false packing. The CCC Schedule of Values for Domestic Shorn Wool reads: "BLACK WOOL (Grease). 1. Original bag. The discount shall be one-third off the grease appraisal price of the white wool. (Figure to the nearest half cent.) 2. Graded. The discount shall be one-third off the grease appraisal price of the comparable grade of white wool. (Figure to the nearest half cent.) NOTE: If the fine and half blood, or the three-eighths and quarter blood are thrown together, the discount shall be one-third of the average grease appraisal price of the comparable grades of white wool. (Figure to the nearest half cent.)"

6. DO NOT PACK BURRY FLEECES WITH FLEECES FREE OF BURRS. The CCC Schedule of Values reads: "Regardless of the State of origin, wools containing clover burrs, foxtail, and other vegetable defects, to a degree serious enough to affect their commercial value, but not requiring carbonizing, shall be discounted a minimum of one (1) cent per pound and a maximum of ten (10) cents per pound, clean basis. NOTE: Wools containing an occasional or very scattered hard burr, or a trace of hay or chaff, are not subject to discount." Carbonizing costs 7 3/4 cents per pound. One burry fleece in a bag may detract from the value of the whole clip. So, keep the burry fleeces out and pack them in separate bags. The same precautions should be taken with any fleeces containing other excessive vegetable defects.

7. DO NOT PACK EWE, YEARLING, AND RAM FLEECES TOGETHER. One of the greatest faults in preparing a clip is to pack yearling or lamb fleeces along with ewe fleeces. It is just as bad to put the ram wool in the sack along with the ewe or the yearling wool. This is because yearling wool is generally lighter shrinking than ewe wool of the same breeding, while ram fleeces are very often heavier in shrinkage as they contain more grease. Yearling wool has a distinctive softness and is usually of greater length than ewe wool. Ram wool, on the other hand, has a thicker fiber than ewe wool. Concerning ram (buck) wool the CCC Schedule of Values states: "1. Crossbred bucks, no

discount. 2. The discount on fine bucks shall be five (5) cents per pound, clean basis, off the comparable ewe wool classification." THEREFORE, TO OBTAIN THE GREATEST VALUE FROM A CLIP OF WOOL THE EWE, YEARLING AND RAM FLEECES SHOULD BE PACKED IN SEPARATE BAGS. The handler and the Government appraisers will then know exactly how much wool there is in each of these classes. The appraiser's work will thus be made easier and their estimates will be more accurate. In small clips where there are only a few ram fleeces and half a bag of yearling fleeces, pack the ram fleeces in the bottom of the bag and the yearling on top, and put a layer of paper between each class. The bag should then be clearly lettered to show what it contains.

8. REQUEST SEPARATE APPRAISALS ON EWE, YEARLING AND RAM WOOLS. The foregoing observations show the benefit to be derived from having a separate appraisal of each class.
9. DO NOT PACK DEAD WOOL, CRUTCHINGS, AND EYE CLIPPINGS ALONG WITH SHORN FLEECES. Wool which has been pulled from the decomposed carcasses of sheep that have died on the range or in the pasture, usually called Murrain wool, is of inferior value because it usually has a foul odor, an unhealthy appearance and harsh quality. Dead wool is that pulled or sheared from dead sheep or pelts; it does not have a foul odor. Crutchings (wool clipped from around the breech and udder prior to lambing) are usually coarse, stained and heavy-shrinking. Eye clippings, or eye-brows, are short pieces of wool clipped from around the eyes of finer-wooled sheep during the winter months. They are of inferior value because they are short. Pieces of wool picked up on the range and around the corrals and sheds, though not worth much because they are weathered and contain straw, leaves and manure, nevertheless have a value, and should be saved and packed with the dead wool and the other kinds in this general class. The CCC Schedule of Values lists the following prices:

|                              |     |                              |
|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Crutchings (Average to good) | 25¢ | per pound sold Boston, Mass. |
| Crutchings (Heavy)           | 21¢ | " " " "                      |
| Eye-brows                    | 25¢ | " " " "                      |
| Murrain dead                 | 22¢ | " " " "                      |
| Pulled dead                  | 33¢ | " " " "                      |

So, always pack such off wools in a separate bag.

10. ALWAYS MARK EVERY BAG OF WOOL TO SHOW THE CONTENTS. Every bag in the clip should be distinctly lettered with the class of wool it contains. (This is the one instance in which branding paint should not be spared.) Each packed bag should be stenciled with letters at least 6 inches high. The following names are suggested for use so that there may be a uniform system of naming:

EW  
YEARLING OR LAMB  
RAM  
BLACK  
TAGS and SWEEPINGS  
DEAD WOOL  
CRUTCHINGS  
EYE-BROWS  
BURRY and SEEDY

It is also a good practice for every wool grower to number each bag of wool consecutively after it has been sewn up, and to weigh it. The number of the bag and the weight can be painted on the burlap below the word designating the contents. A record can then be kept of the bag numbers and weights obtained from each band, in order that the production of wool from each band will be known, and any bags lost or stolen can be identified. If the bands of sheep in an outfit differ in wool production per head owing to breeding, feeding or for any other cause, the benefit can be accurately measured from this production record.

11. NEVER PACK WET WOOL. Mold which develops in wet wool causes heat and injures the fibers so that they become weak and are stained, thus greatly impairing their commercial value. Concerning stained wool the CCC Schedule of Values states that the discount shall be a minimum of two (2) cents per pound for slightly stained wool, up to a maximum of ten (10) cents per pound for heavily stained wools. Even the odor of mold from a lot of wool causes the buyer to discount the value. So, no matter how great the inconvenience, protect the value of the clip by seeing to it that the fleeces when packed do not contain more than the normal moisture content. Lay any wet fleeces out on a clean, dry floor and let the wind dry them out before packing.

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The object of enumerating all these factors which make for good preparation and packing of the wool clip is to indicate the influence on value which these factors can have. A clip of wool is handicapped materially by poor preparation and this handicap may amount to several cents per pound and can mean the difference between profit and loss at the end of the year.

Remember that one burry fleece, one ring of tags, or a few straggling, poorly tied fleeces in a bag can give an appraiser, or a buyer from a mill, a poor impression of the whole clip and that HIS IMPRESSION IS DIRECTLY REFLECTED ON THE PRICE WHICH THE WOOL GROWER RECEIVES. According to the CCC Schedule of Values for the 1945 clip up to three (3) percent of the grease appraisal price of wool appraised in the original bags will be deducted if all tags and other off wools are not packed separately by the wool grower. Even if there should be only one tag ring in a single bag in your whole clip its evidence will be extremely detrimental to the value of the clip.

It costs so little more to prepare wool correctly that even in this time of insufficient labor every wool grower should make a supreme effort to prepare his wool in the best way. Nothing will be lost by taking that care, and the benefits to be gained will prove substantial in the long run.

It has been said that there is great need for improvement in the wool industry as a whole. Whole-hearted cooperation from all branches of the industry can never be obtained unless either the wool growers, the dealers, the topmakers or the wool manufacturers take the initiative and commence constructive improvement. It is suggested that the wool-growing end of the wool industry can profitably take the lead in such improvement.

The progress made in the development of the coring test for shrinkage determination of grease wool indicates that there is a strong possibility that the method can be established as a practicable and economical test. With a clip of wool

prepared and packed in the most acceptable way, the labor and time involved in taking the test samples will be greatly decreased, and the cost of sampling thus lowered.

So, let us raise the standard of the wool clip of the United States in order that wool can more successfully compete with synthetic fibers and fabrics in the long, hard battle of fibers which will certainly be upon us with the termination of this war emergency period.